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ABSTRACT

A one-day invitational forum was convened to gain some insight into factors that continue to impede the identification, recruitment, admission, retention and graduation of minority students in graduate education. The objectives of the forum were to review the current status and to formulate recommendations on this subject. Following a summary of the keynote address by Anne S. Pruitt and the comments of respondents, a discussion of exemplary programs is summarized. Several administrative, recruitment and admissions factors affecting admission and success in graduate programs are identified. The consensus arrived at by several task force discussion groups is reported, followed by some statistical data on declining minority participation in graduate study and factors affecting low minority participation which supported the groups' conclusions. Ten recommendations resulting from the forum, and steps for the implementation of each, are presented. Among these are the following: (1) designate a national organization as the agency to identify and disseminate information on graduate study and career opportunities for minorities; (2) each institution should sensitize graduate faculty to the need for mentoring among minority students; (3) institutions should reduce the heavy dependency of minority students on funding sources outside the university; (4) institutions should recruit minority faculty and administrators at all levels; and (5) further research on minority participation should be undertaken to address specific issues. A list of the forum participants and a description of the program of the National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering are appended. (KM)

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MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN GRADUATE EDUCATION: AN ACTION PLAN

The Report of the National Invitational Forum on The Status of Minority Participation in Graduate Education

Howard G. Adams, Convener

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Howard University
Washington, D.C.
October 23, 1986

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FORWARD

This report summarizes the activities and findings of the National Forum on the status of Minority Participation in Graduate Education. The Forum had two objectives: to review the current status of minority participation in graduate education, and to formulate recommendations to address issues surrounding the continuing underrepresentation of minority students in graduate school.

The Forum was organized and convened by Howard G. Adams, Executive Director, National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering, Inc.-- (GEM Program). The GEM Program was sponsor.

Special thanks to Johnetta Davis, Associate Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Howard University, who was coordinator for the Forum at Howard University, the host institution. The cooperation exhibited by Dr. Davis, her staff, the graduate school and university made the Forum possible.

This report was written by Howard G. Adams, Executive Director and Martha M. Conley, Coordinator, Student Programs, the National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering, Inc.

FORUM 1986

MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN GRADUATE EDUCATION:
AN ACTION PLAN

RATIONALE FOR FORUM

After more than two decades of activity designed to address the underrepresentation of minority students (American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics) in graduate education, the 1985 Fourth Annual American Council on Education Report on Minorities in Higher Education reported a continuing trend of declining enrollment for minorities at the graduate level. Beyond enrollment, the National Research Council reported that in 1984, of the total Ph.D.'s granted in the U.S., only 5.5% were awarded to minority students; 3.4% to Blacks, 1.9% to Hispanics, Hispanics, and 0.2% to American Indians.

To gain some insight into factors that continue to impede the identification, recruitment, admission, retention and graduation of minority students in graduate education, a one-day invitational Forum was held October 23, 1986 at Howard University.

The invited participants (see Appendix A), drawn from a cross section of persons from academia, educational associations, governmental agencies, funding sources, and industry were asked to come prepared to discuss, present ideas, and formulate recommendations for the following lead questions:

1. What factors continue to impede the identification, recruitment, admission, retention and graduation of minority students in graduate education?

2. Are there institutional policies/procedures that negatively impact the participation of minority students?

3. Are there federal policies/procedures that negatively impact graduate study participation of minority students?

4. What has, and can be, learned from successful graduate-level programs aimed at providing access and choice to minority students?

5. What steps, if taken, might further democratize graduate education and thus make it available and attractive to minority students?

This report summarizes the principle activities and findings of the Forum and closes with a series of recommendations and action steps offered for addressing the underrepresentation of minority students in graduate education.

PROGRAM AND FINDINGS

The meeting was opened with a keynote address by Anne S. Pruitt, Director, Center for Teaching Excellence, Ohio State University. Pruitt, a veteran advocate who has written widely in the area of minority representation in graduate education, outlined for the group "how institutional procedures and policies impede minority access and choice to graduate-level programs." She attributes the decline in minority graduate school participation, in part, to institutional policies and procedures on recruitment, financial aid, subjective admissions screening criteria and the graduate school environment.

Pruitt strongly emphasized that as this Nation's demographic mix changes, we must develop our human resources from all sectors of the population.

Reginald Wilson lead a group of respondents--Shirley Malcom, John B. Turner, and Leonard Valverde--through a discussion of Pruitt's paper.

There was consensus among the panelists to Pruitt's report of the continuing decline of minority participation in graduate education. Wilson noted that the most serious area of the decline has been at the master's level and is especially acute among black male students.

Turner challenged the group to examine the shift in minority graduate participation away from the sciences and engineering to business, psychology and law. He offered that unsuccessful recruitment to the sciences and engineering might be traced to inadequate counseling concerning the graduate school admission/financial aid process.

Valverde countered that the decline in participation might be attributable to faculty attitudes which hold that excellence and minority students are incompatible.

Malcolm addressed the need to add graduation to the recruitment, admission and retention discussion. She added that a key factor which determines who will graduate is the student/mentor relationship, which must not be overlooked or devalued. Both Malcom and Valverde challenged the group to emphasize to the larger public that diversity in a student population does not mean deficiency.

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

Other features of the Forum were presentations of exemplary programs that have proven successful in identifying, enrolling, retaining, and graduating minority graduate students. Among the presentations made were: The Ohio State University's Minority Day Visitation Program, Frank W. Hale, Jr.; the McKnight Program in Higher Education in Florida, Frankie Felder; the GEM Program, Martha M. Conley; NASA's Minority Graduate Research Program with Historical Black Colleges and Universities, Harriett G. Jenkins; CIC Minorities Fellowship Program, Carolyn Calloway-Thomas; NSF Minorities Fellowship Program, Terence Porter; and M.I.T.'s Minority Graduate Student Program, John B. Turner.

From discussion and review of exemplary programs presented, it was generally concluded that no single program or effort offered solutions for effectively dealing with the full magnitude of the problem. Rather, by looking at various components of many programs, a pattern developed that indicated factors necessary if minorities are to be admitted and nurtured to successful completion of advanced-degree programs.

These were found to be:

* A top-level administrator with line authority in place with both the mandate and resources to implement and coordinate activites for minority students at the graduate level.

* The person responsible for minority recruitment and admissions has knowledge of the types of financial aid available, both internally and externally, and is usually able to offer the financial-aid package with admission. Note: Admission without adequate financial resources is doomed to failure.

* Formalized institutional links between consortium-type programs and/or undergraduate schools with large concentrations of minority students, e.g. Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

* Materials used in the recruitment process reflect campus life as it applies to the informational needs of minority students.

* Acceptance of program accountability by the top leadership of the institution through monitoring and evaluation.

* A number of factors are used to determine admission eligibility rather than relying solely on standardized test scores.

TASK FORCE GROUP

In the afternoon, the Forum was devoted to working task force groups. Group leaders and their topics were as follows: Martha M. Conley, "Identification and Recruitment;" Ron Simmons and Frankie Felder, "The Environment of Support: Mentoring and Research Advisement;" Shirley Malcom, "National Policy Issues;" and John B. Turner, "Funding and Financial Aid."

The Task Force Groups reported a wide range of opinions, explanations, and concerns on the issues surrounding the under-representation of minority students in graduate programs. And although several programs were cited as exemplary, the general consensus was that the national effort for attracting, enrolling, and graduating minority students from graduate schools has lost momentum.

Among evidence cited during the Forum which adds credence to this claim was the following:

* The number of blacks in graduate school dropped 19.2% from 1977 to 1985, falling from 65,352 to 52,834. In 1976, blacks represented 6% of total enrollment--by 1985 the percentage was down to 4.8%

* In 1978 of 32,664 Ph.D's awarded in the United States, 1,810 or 5.5% were awarded to minority students. In 1984, 31,253 Ph.D's were awarded--but only 1,627 or 5.2% went to minority students.

In reviewing factors that continue to perpetuate the paucity of minority participation in graduate programs, the most cited causes were:

* The negative portrayal of higher education as a place to career, where advanced degrees are prerequisites for admission to the academy.

* Low retention rates of minority graduate students due to environmental factors--adequate financial resources, mentoring, research advisement, social outlets, etc.--which have caused many schools to tighten admission criteria.

* The negative growth in funds to support minority graduate students.

* Industry's move to concentrate its recruitment activities on the most able minority students (for affirmative action reasons) thus eliminating many top candidates from the graduate school applicants' pool.

* The attraction of professional schools--business, law, and medicine--which traditionally have provided a better image of career possibilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force leaders and each participant were asked to submit recommendations and action steps. A number of items were received. Each was reviewed and prioritized into ten broad areas for this summary report.

Recommendation I: Designate CGS, ETS, ACE or some similar national organization as the agency to identify and disseminate information on graduate study and career opportunities for minority undergraduate students, advisors, and the larger community.

Steps:

A) Establish a clearinghouse for information on exemplary programs, speakers, publications and other activities aimed at minority graduate students.

B) Create and implement a news media campaign directed toward encouraging minority students to consider graduate school.

C) Develop and conduct workshops to train college personnel in dealing with the concerns of graduate level minority students.

Recommendation II: Each institution should take immediate steps to sensitize the graduate faculty to the reality that minority students, like majority students need mentoring--counseling/advising/prodding--if they are to do quality graduate work.

Steps:

A) Establish orientation activities for departmental chairpersons and faculty.

B) Engage minority students in regular departmental activities-- seminars, presenting papers and talks, research, social functions, meetings, and other professional development activities.

C) Integrate minority students into assigned project/study groups.

D) Provide, at the departmental level, publications with a minority prospective.

E) Appoint strong tenured faculty to advise and supervise minority research activites.

Recommendation III: Institutionalize minority graduate-study activities to give them legitimacy and status afforded other respected university programs.

Steps:

A) Place administration, implementation, and monitoring of the program under a senior-level official.

B) Hold departments and faculty accountable for meeting institutional goals set for the program.

C) Include minority experts and professionals in the regular university lecture/seminar schedule.

D) Support minority organizations and professional associations.

E) Recognize, through awards and incentives, exemplary organization/program activity.

Recommendation IV: Institutions should move to reduce the pattern of heavy dependency by minority students on outside funding (extenal to the university) for support.

Steps:

A) Make a careful review of departmental fellowships/assistantships to make sure minority students equally share these resources.

B) Establish quantitative goals and timetables for minority research/teaching assistants.

C) Develop and publish guidelines and procedures to assist minority students in their search for institutional grants and awards.

Recommendation V: Expand the opportunity for minority students to participate in departmental/professionally controlled research which most often leads to master's thesis and doctoral dissertations.

Steps:

A) Have faculty lead seminars on their research activities to make students aware of opportunities that exist for graduate research assistantships.

B) Involve minority students in established alliances with industry where the potential exists for research activity.

C) Invite the participation of minority students in conferences and other professional activity to gain insight into their area of interest from faculty of other universities and corporate supporters.

Recommendation VI: Broaden the recruitment pool for graduate study. NOTE: Minority students tend to segment their graduate education rather than continue B.S. to Ph.,D. degrees without disruption.

Steps:

A) Recruit non-traditional students--students who have worked from three to five years following completion of either the B.S. or M.S. degree.

B) Provide sponsorship and incentives for students who have withdrawn from graduate study to return and complete their programs.

C) Develop linkages with historically black institutions and community colleges to offer opportunities for non-terminal degreed faculty to return to graduate school.

Recommendation VII: Colleges and universities should make every effort to identify and recruit minority faculty and administrators at all levels within the institution.

Steps:

A) Work to promote and tenure minority educators. Conduct annual evaluation in order to identify progress made toward tenure and promotion.

B) Review and revise hiring and promotion criteria that will allow for acknowledgement of a wider range of criteria.

C) Incorporate new junior minority faculty into research activities to provide mentorship during first two years of appointment.

Recommendation VIII: That federal and state policy makers give increased attention to the population shifts which favor underrepresented minority groups. Particular attention should be given to the long-term national needs for trained leaders among minorities in academia, government, and industry.

Steps:

A) Federal and state policy makers should increase financial aid for minority students at the graduate level.

B) Federal and state research dollars should be reviewed on the basis of educational equity issues.

C) All funds made to minority-oriented programs should require an evaluation component to review progress until completion of degrees.

D) All funding agencies should continuously evaluate their usuage of minority researchers and consultants within their activities.

Recommendation IX: That federal, state and other agencies responsible for collecting data on minority graduate students pay attention to the quality and accuracy of information generated.

Steps:

A) Report data on ethnic basis, e.g. Mexican American, Black American, American Indian.

B) Collect data on an annual basis for comparative purpose and to demonstrate progress.

C) Standardize a data collection instrument for quality and uniformity.

D) Publish a report annually on the data collected by each state of the number of minority students in graduate and professional schools, and their progress.

Recommendation X: That further research on minority participation in graduate education be undertaken to address problems listed below.

Steps:

A) What can be done to reduce the number of ABD.

B) Ways to develop the academic leadership potential of minority professionals.

C) What factors influence minority students to choose professional schools over Ph.D. programs.

D) Key factors in reaching a critical mass at identifiable institutions.

E) Methods of formalizing cooperative alliances between Historically Black Colleges and Universities and majority state land-grant universities with special emphasis on recruitment and funds for state residents.

SUMMARY

Clearly, it is not possible for a group such as the Forum participants, to resolve in one day all of the issues surrounding the continuing underrepresentation of minority students in graduate programs. We must, therefore, reiterate that the main purpose of the Forum was to focus the issues concerning the problem and offer some recommendations to guide future actions.

The recommendations generated suggested a number of alternatives for universities, funding agencies, educational associations and policy makers to consider if they are interested in increasing the participation rates of minority students in graduate education. In some instances, to institute the recommendations will require procedural and strategical changes that differ from traditional methods of operation. There will be cost involved, both human and financial.

We believe, however, that whatever the cost, it must be met. This is particularly important, since minority groups are projected to comprise 40% of the college-age population of students by the year 1995.

Further realizing that an advanced education is an important route to position of leadership in our society, we believe that it is paramount that minority group members be trained to be full participants in this Nation. For this reason, we strongly urge that the issue of minority participation in graduate education be placed on the main agenda of each professional education conference, policy review and planning activity for all graduate educational institutions.

APPENDIX A

FORUM 1986 ATTENDANCE
OCTOBER 23, 1986
HOWARD UNIVERSITY

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Executive Director
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Wallace L. Jones
Executive Director
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Thomas J. Linney
Director of Government Relations
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NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR GRADUATE DEGREES
FOR MINORITIES IN ENGINEERING, INC.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering, Inc. (GEM) was formed in 1976. GEM is composed of 51 engineering schools (university members) and 50 industrial and governmental research laboratories (employer members).

The goal of GEM is to increase the number of minority students entering graduate engineering studies. The program is designed to provide each student participant with practical engineering experience through summer work opportunities, and give financial support during graduate study toward a master's degree in any one of the various disciplines of engineering.

Yearly, the Consortium Staff, University and Employer Representatives band together in a nationwide campaign to attract some of the country's top minority engineering talent. This year-round identification effort culminates in the development of a pool of high-quality potential graduate school applicants.

Once the pool of students is identified, fellowship selections are made annually in late January. Criteria for student selection: (1) American citizenship; (2) specific ethnicity: those ethnic minorities which are underrepresented in the engineering profession--American Indian, Black American, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican; (3) minimum of junior year status in an accredited engineering discipline; and, (4) an academic record that indicates the ability to pursue graduate studies in engineering.

Each fellowship pays tuition and fees at a member university, plus a $5,000 living stipend per academic year. In addition, during the summer, each Fellow is assigned to a paid internship with a member employer. Students who complete the M.S. in the GEM Program are assured of doctorate support by member schools should they elect to continue for the Ph.D.

The affairs of the Consortium are governed by a Board of Directors, made up of representatives from each university and employer member. The program is incorporated in the State of Indiana as a not-for-profit corporation and is headquarterd at the University of Notre Dame.